

Higher National Unit Specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Theatre Arts: An Introduction to Technical Theatre

Unit code: DG4J 34

Unit purpose: This Unit is designed to enable candidates to investigate how theatre venues operate, understand technical staff structures and to recognise the processes involved in staging a production effectively.

It prepares them for this by researching specific technical areas and their associated working environments and learning how technical staff work as a team throughout the Production Process. It is primarily intended to give candidates who are training as performers an introduction to technical theatre. It would also be relevant to those studying any 'arts' related programmes.

On completion of the Unit the candidate should be able to:

1. Describe the duties of key technical personnel and explain their roles throughout the Production Process, in a variety of venues.
2. Research and produce materials relating to set or costume design
3. Prepare a lighting or sound plan
4. Compile an annotated Prompt Copy

Credit value: 2 HN Credits at SCQF level 7: (16 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7*)

**SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: Access will be at the discretion of the centre and the following recommendations are for guidance only.

Where a candidate has achieved the course entry criteria for HNC/D Acting and Performance, they will have shown sufficient knowledge and skills for access to this unit.

Core skills: There may be opportunities to gather evidence towards core skills in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of core skills or core skills components.

Context for delivery: This unit is included in the optional framework of HNC/D Acting and Performance. If this Unit is delivered as part of a group award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the group award to which it contributes.

General information for centres (cont)

Assessment: This Unit could be assessed by a series of projects requiring the candidate to investigate different technical areas.

Assessment for Outcome 1 should be completed first as this gives the candidates an overview of staffing structures, performance spaces and types of venue.

Outcomes 2 – 4 are project based assessments and there is no specific order in which they have to be assessed.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

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The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, knowledge and/or skills, and evidence requirements are mandatory.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the knowledge and/or skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Describe the duties of key technical personnel and explain their roles throughout the Production Process, in a variety of venues.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ types of theatre venues
- ◆ production companies
- ◆ performance spaces
- ◆ theatre personnel
- ◆ the production process

Evidence requirements

Evidence will be generated in response to specific questions. Each candidate will need evidence to show that they can, with reference to specific theatre venues, provide a clear and accurate description of the roles of key technical staff. In addition, candidates must be able to show a clear understanding of the production process.

Candidates must:

- ◆ explain the operational structure of three production venues
- ◆ give diagrams of four different types of performance space and give staging opportunities and constraints for each – reference should be made to performers, technical staff and audience point of view
- ◆ give an accurate description of key theatre personnel and describe their working environments
- ◆ explain the main stages of the production process.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Theatre Arts: An Introduction to Technical Theatre

Assessment guidelines

The assessment of this Outcome can be carried out as a single assessment event lasting 2 hours with a series of questions covering all points in knowledge and skills. The assessment should give candidates the opportunity to use diagrammatic evidence. If necessary the assessment can be broken into 2 separate events with appropriate time allocation for each. Assessment should take place in controlled conditions. Candidates may not bring in textbooks, handouts, class notes or other material.

Outcome 2

Research and produce materials relating to set or costume design.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ scale ground plans, working drawings/patterns, scale models
- ◆ scenic/costume construction, flats, rostra, materials
- ◆ design, perspective, scenic art
- ◆ research, text study, characters, period, style, costume

Evidence requirements

Candidate must produce a portfolio of materials based on a project. Each candidate will need evidence to show his or her understanding of scale plans and be able to present an appropriate set OR costume design from a design brief.

Candidates must:

- ◆ identify symbols, centre line, setting line, flats, rostra, cyclorama and sight lines from a scale ground plan
- ◆ explain how elements of their set are constructed including the materials they would use
- ◆ show the audiences view of the setting and give examples of colour and paint effects applied to scenery

OR

- ◆ research who the characters are, their background, social class and the environments they inhabit within the play
- ◆ create a costume plot
- ◆ show ideas of what each character's costumes may look like and the fabrics they could made from.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Theatre Arts: An Introduction to Technical Theatre

Assessment guidelines

Both options require the candidate to produce a portfolio which effectively communicates how their set or costume design meet the design brief. Materials may include ground plans, sketches, sample materials photographs and diagrams.

Candidates should be encouraged to use a variety of resources for this assessment. Research can include on-line learning and computer aided design, indeed any medium the candidate feels would assist with the communication of their ideas. Candidates should have access to specialist craft materials for presentation of their portfolio.

Time scale for this assessment should be 12 – 16 weeks.

This Outcome could integrate with Outcomes 3 and 4 if the text has sufficient design opportunities.

Outcome 3

Prepare a lighting or sound plan.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ lighting and sound equipment
- ◆ aims in lighting and sound
- ◆ production styles
- ◆ lighting and sound plans, symbols, study of text, cue synopsis
- ◆ sound recording and editing

Evidence requirements

Evidence will be generated in the form of a cue synopsis created as part of a project. Each candidate will need evidence to demonstrate the planning and preparation of lighting or sound requirements.

Candidates must:

- ◆ explain the characteristics of four types of theatre lantern
- ◆ suggest uses for each lantern type
- ◆ prepare a lighting cue synopsis from the text

OR

- ◆ describe equipment in a basic sound system
- ◆ prepare a sound plan from the text
- ◆ record sound effects

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Theatre Arts: An Introduction to Technical Theatre

Assessment guidelines

Candidates will be given a text containing a variety of lighting and sound cues. They are required to either describe different types of lantern, explain their characteristics and to create a lighting synopsis from the text, or describe the sound chain, prepare a sound plan and record at least two sound cues. Time scale for this assessment should be 6 – 8 weeks.

This Outcome could integrate with Outcomes 2 and 4 if the text has adequate lighting and sound opportunities. If candidates are working on a text for performance purposes it would be possible for them to integrate by using the same text. This will give candidates an opportunity to see how lighting and sound plans are put into practice.

Outcome 4

Compile an annotated Prompt Copy.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ the prompt copy, contents
- ◆ performance scripts and layout
- ◆ stage properties
- ◆ blocking, cues, calls

Evidence requirements

Evidence will be generated in the form of a Prompt Copy as part of a project. Each candidate will need evidence to show they can compile a Prompt Copy and prop list.

Candidates must:

- ◆ describe the purpose of the Prompt Copy, its contents and the application in rehearsals and performance
- ◆ prepare a script in Prompt Copy format
- ◆ identify stage properties from the text and create a prop list
- ◆ write blocking, standbys, lighting and sound cues using correct annotation

Assessment guidelines

Candidates should be given a script extract containing a variety of moves, props, lighting and sound cues. The Candidate is required to compile a Prompt Copy with title page, an explanation of the contents, a clear and legible script with cue pages detailing blocking, lighting and sound cues and produce an accurate and detailed Prop List.

This Outcome could integrate with Outcomes 2 and 3 if the text has adequate assessment opportunities.

Administrative Information

Unit code:	DG4J 34
Unit title:	Theatre Arts: An Introduction to Technical Theatre
Superclass category:	LE
Date of publication:	1 July 2004
Version:	01
Source:	SQA

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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Theatre Arts: An Introduction to Technical Theatre

This part of the Unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 80 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

The Unit is intended to provide technical skills to performers, technicians **or** candidates working (or training) in non-performing areas of theatres such as directing, administration and venue management.

Candidates study the critical path within the Production Process encompassing scheduling, preparation and performance of a production or event. Throughout the Unit the candidate should be kept aware of the variety of venues and companies from small- scale touring and Theatre in Education to the National Theatre, Repertory and larger-scale touring.

Some skills may be of particular significance depending on the career path the candidate intends to follow. For example, the role of the performer in a small-scale tour may require costume-related skills. A musician/performer may require practical skills using lighting and sound equipment. A venue manager may wish to widen their knowledge of technical skills to enable effective scheduling, staffing and budgeting for their incoming programme of events. Whilst this Unit is not recognised by any professional body it should be delivered to candidates whereby information given regarding health & safety, materials, construction methods and equipment should, as far as possible, relate to 'Industry Standard.'

Outcome 1 looks at key theatre personnel and their roles, the Production Process, and a variety of venues. Candidates will look at different methods of staging and the opportunities and constraints of each. One approach to learning may be discussion over plans or mock-ups using staging. Investigations can be from either performer, technician or audience viewpoint. Candidates will look at the organisation of three different venues, investigate their staffing and the types of production they stage. A model theatre and scale set will help to explain terminology and staging.

In **Outcome 2** candidates study ground plans, look at a variety of stage set and costume designs, scenic construction, materials (both scenic and fabric) and health & safety. Candidates should learn basic rules of design and balance relating to 3- dimensional design. Videos and slides of set and costume design would be good media to enrich learning in this area. Candidates should learn how to research and be encouraged to investigate theatre-based web-sites, relevant books, museums and publications.

The importance of text and character study should be emphasised. The candidates should learn how to communicate their ideas in a variety of media. Sample portfolios could be used to demonstrate design presentation.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Theatre Arts: An Introduction to Technical Theatre

Outcome 3 The content of this Outcome involves basic lighting and sound technology and the preparation of plans. Candidates will learn the aims in theatre lighting and sound and understand different production styles. They study characteristics of theatre lanterns and associated equipment. It would be useful to let candidates experiment with basic portable (or permanent) lighting and sound equipment to see what effects are possible and to experiment recording and editing. Opportunities to observe lighting sessions for production will enhance learning.

In **Outcome 4** candidates learn how the Prompt Book is used in rehearsals and performance, from the Director's, Actors' and Technical point of view. They will study the layout of the book and learn how to write basic blocking and technical cues. A valuable learning experience could be for candidates to listen to a performance being 'cued' from the prompt book. Candidates investigate categories of stage properties, their use in rehearsal and performance, and how to list and organise them.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

This Unit is freestanding although it may be integrated with some Units on performance-based courses. If candidates are using a specific text for a production Unit it may be possible for them to use the same text for some Outcomes of this Unit.

Delivery of this Unit will work well if candidates are studying or working in a venue where productions are staged on a frequent basis. This will allow the candidate to appreciate its relevance, seeing technical skills being applied to real productions.

Assessment for Outcome 1 should be completed first as this gives the candidates an overview of staffing structures, performance spaces and types of venue.

Outcomes 2 – 4 are project based assessments and there is no specific order in which they have to be assessed.

Candidates should have at least one backstage tour of a working theatre, and go to see performances in a variety of stage settings. Visits to museums and art galleries will be useful for set and costume design research.

Outcome 1 is a single assessment, which should be held in controlled conditions. Candidates have to explain production venues, diagram types of staging, explain production personnel and the Production Process

Outcome 2 is a project-based assessment. Candidates work from a Design Brief and create a Set or Costume design from a given text.

Outcome 3 is a project-based assessment. Candidates create a lighting or sound plot from a given text.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Theatre Arts: An Introduction to Technical Theatre

Outcome 4 is a project-based assessment. Candidates create a prompt book and detailed prop list from a given text.

Open learning

The Outcomes in this unit require candidates to use specialist lighting and sound equipment under supervised conditions, and so the opportunities for distance learning are very limited.

Because of the intensive nature of the training for this unit when taken as part of a course, part-time provision would be most unusual and difficult to achieve.

For information on normal open learning arrangements, please refer to the SQA guide *Assessment and Quality Assurance and Distance Learning (SQA 2000)*.

Special needs

This Unit specification is intended to ensure that there are no artificial barriers to learning or assessment. Special needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments or considering special alternative Outcomes for Units. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance on Special Assessment Arrangements (SQA, 2001)*.

General information for candidates

Unit title: Theatre Arts: An Introduction to Technical Theatre

This wide-ranging Unit is designed to show candidates how theatre productions are staged. It allows them to follow the production process from building the set to the first night performance. It is primarily intended as an introduction to technical theatre for those training as performers or technicians, but it would also be valuable for those working or training in any arts related areas.

The Unit is about theatre venues, methods of staging, scheduling and the Production Process. It has 4 main areas, each of which is the subject of a separate Outcome. To begin with, candidates will look at the environments in which performances take place. They will then examine the work of the teams who are responsible for stage management, set design, costume, lighting and sound. An element of practical work is involved, this takes the form of demonstration of equipment and hands on experience.

The knowledge candidates will gain from this Unit will give them an understanding of the technical work which goes into a production and also provide them with some skills they will find useful either as a performer or technician.

In order to complete this Unit successfully, candidates will be required to achieve a satisfactory level of performance on all four pieces of assessed work. The first assessment is an assessment in controlled conditions. The assessment will last for approximately 2 hours, and candidates will be required to answer questions about production venues, performance spaces and the production process. This assessment may be broken down into two separate 1-hour assessments. There are then 3 other assessments evenly spaced throughout the unit. These are based on small projects in stage management and either lighting or sound and set design or costume.